

May 2013

# Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living

## The Importance of Fiber

We have all heard of Fiber. It is advertised on television. We find numerous products that claim to be excellent sources. Do we really know why it is good for us?

Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes (beans and lentils). Unlike other nutrients, fiber doesn't go through the digestive process in our bodies. Fiber passes, intact through our stomach, small intestines, and colon, all the way out of our body. Fiber adds bulk to our stool and acts like a colon scrubber to remove harmful waste.

### There are two kinds of fiber.

**Soluble Fiber**—Dissolves in water and forms a gel-like consistency. It helps lower bad cholesterol and blood glucose levels. It is found in beans, peas, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, barley, and oats.

**Insoluble Fiber**—Does not dissolve in water. Insoluble fiber promotes the movement of material through the digestive tract. Insoluble fiber is found in whole wheat flour, wheat bran, nuts, beans, and vegetables.

### Benefits of Fiber.

- Normalizes Bowel Movements.**—Increases the weight and size of stool and softens it to allow for easier movement through the intestinal tract, ultimately decreasing constipation.
- Helps Maintain Bowel Health.**—May lower your risk of hemorrhoid development and diverticular disease, as well as decrease the risk of colon cancer.
- Lowers Cholesterol Levels.**—Helps lower total blood cholesterol levels by lowering “bad” or LDL cholesterol.
- Helps Control Blood Glucose Levels.**—When soluble fiber dissolves in our stomachs the gel-like consistency remaining can slow the digestive process down, ultimately slowing the breakdown of carbo-



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hydrates into glucose and the speed at which the glucose is absorbed. This improves blood glucose levels.

•**Aids in Maintaining a Healthy Weight.**—High-fiber foods generally require more chewing time, which causes us to eat slower and allow our brain more time to tell us we are full which helps to prevent us from overeating. Also, as we mentioned earlier, high fiber foods slow down the digestive process meaning we feel full for longer periods of time. High fiber foods are also lower in calories and high in vitamins and minerals. We can eat the same or larger quantities of nutrient dense foods such as fruits and vegetables and end up consuming less calories and feel fuller.

### How much Fiber do we need?

Most of us need between 20-35 grams per day. A good goal is to eat at least five fruits and vegetables per day and consume at least half your grains from whole grain sources. However, if you plan to increase your fiber intake do so slowly over a few weeks. Increasing your fiber too quickly can cause abdominal discomfort.

## **CHECK OUT THESE NEW PROGRAMS**

### ***Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (AFEP)***

AFEP created by the Arthritis Foundation is an exercise program that provides a wide variety of activities including:

Range-of-motion and endurance-building activities  
Relaxation techniques  
Health education topics

This program can help to improve functional ability, decrease depression, and increase confidence in one's ability to exercise.

Classes typically meet two or three times per week.

### ***Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP)***

The Chronic Disease Self Management Program empowers people with chronic disease to take an active role in managing their chronic conditions. It is a workshop given two and a half hours, once a week, for six weeks that focuses on the below topics:

1. Techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation;
2. Appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility and endurance;
3. Appropriate use of medications;
4. Communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals;
5. Nutrition;
6. How to evaluate new treatments.

### ***Walk With Ease (WWE)***

If you can be on your feet for 10 minutes without increased pain this program maybe for you!

This program was created by the Arthritis Foundation to help people reduce pain and improve overall health. Even if you do not have Arthritis you may benefit from this program. Benefits of WWE include:

It will help motivate you to get into shape.  
Help you to walk safely and comfortably.  
Improve your flexibility, strength, and stamina.  
Reduce pain and help you feel great.

You can participate in this program either individually or in a group setting.

Contact your local Area Agency on Aging and Independent Living to get signed up for the above programs. To find you local office call the phone number or visit the link below.

## **Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Aging and Independent Living**

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